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26 Sep 64

Brief Summary of War Department Participation in Psychological Warfare

1. In World War I, the Psychologic Subsection of M. I. 2, Military Intelligence Division, was charged with the collection of information on enemy propaganda, formation of plans for the maintenance of American and Allied morale, civilian and military, and for the destruction of enemy morale. It was responsible for psychologic estimates and daily psychologic reports, from which were prepared studies of German propaganda operations and objectives. It was responsible also for the planning of leaflet warfare, including dissemination by aircraft or trench patrols.

2. Interest in psychological warfare was allowed to lapse in the period 1919-1941, and no provision was made in the organization of the War Department for army participation in psychological warfare activities.

3. In June 1941, the Special Studies Group was organized by direction of the Secretary of War under Brigadier General Sherman Miles, then acting AG of S, G-2. The group was headed by Lt. Col. Percy G. Black, F.A. Its mission was to provide a psychological analysis of enemy nations, neutrals, and our own people, to promote projects in domestic and foreign psychology accurately timed to the objectives of war plans, and to act as War Department spokesman on questions of psychology in order to coordinate the activities of other government or individual groups engaged in active propaganda work to the national military objective. In March 1942, just prior to the reorganization of G-2, the extreme secrecy concerning the activities of this group was lifted to the extent of renaming it the Psychological Warfare Branch, G-2.

4. Also in March 1942, under directive of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS 12), the Joint Psychological Warfare Committee was created for the purpose of planning psychological warfare in combat theaters and enemy-controlled areas. The JPWC was to initiate, formulate, and develop plans for psychological warfare, to act as coordinating agency, and to integrate psychological warfare with military strategy.

5. In December 1942, JCS 155 divided the responsibility for Psychological Warfare and propaganda as follows: OGS was responsible for planning, development, coordination and execution of the military program of psychological warfare and for the compilation of such information as might be required for military operations; Overt propaganda was to be executed by OWI, and economic warfare by HEW. Theater commanders were to control psychological warfare in their areas, and the functions of OGS were restricted to those in support of military operations. The Psychological Warfare Branch was therefore abolished (MIS Memo 147, 31 Dec 1944).

6. In March 1943, Colonel H. D. Kehm of Operations Division, WDGS, was appointed to act as liaison officer between JCS on the one hand and OWI and CIAA on the other. His duties were:

JCS and NSC review(s) completed.

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(a) To sit as member of the Overseas Planning Group of the OWI.

(b) To maintain contact with all planning agencies of the JCS and to furnish the OWI with details of JCS plans, consistent with security, in order to insure correlation between military and propaganda plans.

(c) To transmit requests from the JCS to the OWI relative to propaganda activities desired for the purpose of furthering military operations.

(d) To present to the JCS all basic and special propaganda plans which require their approval.

7. Since this arrangement did not prove satisfactory, in August 1943, the Deputy Chief of Staff directed that the Operations Division and G-2, jointly submit recommendations on the question of a War Department agency for psychological warfare. In compliance with this directive a report was rendered in which the recommendation was made that a War Department agency be established, preferably under the AG of S, G-2, with the function of effecting the requisite coordination and control of propaganda, and that the chief of this section be appointed as JCS liaison officer with OWI and CIAA.

8. Accordingly, by direction of the Deputy Chief of Staff, a Propaganda Branch was established in the Military Intelligence Division under direct control of the AG of S, G-2, (MID Memorandum No. 78, 15 Nov 1943, (TAB A).

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